

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 4, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write regarding reports of U.S.-backed efforts to facilitate the normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Peace between Israel and its neighbors has been a longstanding goal of U.S. foreign policy, and we are maintaining an open mind about any agreement that would potentially deepen the political, cultural and economic ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel. As the Administration pursues negotiations to achieve an agreement that may require Senate action, we write to share our views on the parameters of any potential proposal that aligns with U.S. security goals and advances your stated goals for long term peace, stability and justice in the region.

We are concerned about reports that Saudi Arabia is requesting a security guarantee from the United States in exchange for normalization with Israel. Historically, security guarantees through defense treaties have only been provided to the closest of U.S. allies: democracies that share our interests and our values. Further, the U.S. has long refrained from committing our nation to treaty-backed security guarantees in the volatile Middle East, a region rife with conflict. A high degree of proof would be required to show that a binding defense treaty with Saudi Arabia – an authoritarian regime which regularly undermines U.S. interests in the region, has a deeply concerning human rights record, and has pursued an aggressive and reckless foreign policy agenda – aligns with U.S. interests, especially if such a commitment requires the U.S. to deploy substantial new permanent resources to the region.

The Saudi government is also reportedly seeking U.S. support to develop a civilian nuclear program, and to purchase more advanced U.S. weaponry. While we should seriously consider whether it is in U.S. interests to help Saudi Arabia develop a domestic nuclear program, we should always maintain the high bar of the “gold standard” 123 Agreement and insist on adherence to the Additional Protocol. And as the devastating war in Yemen has shown, the provision of more advanced weaponry to Saudi Arabia should be done with careful deliberation to ensure that such equipment only be used for truly defensive purposes and does not contribute to a regional arms race.

Finally, to the extent the United States is considering the precedent-breaking upgrade to our security relationship with Saudi Arabia outlined above as part of a comprehensive security and recognition agreement between Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, the agreement should include meaningful, clearly defined and enforceable provisions to achieve your stated objective of preserving the option of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to ensure that there be “equal measures of dignity and security” for both Israelis and Palestinians. This should include, among other measures, a commitment by Israel not to annex any or all of the West Bank; to halt settlement construction and expansion; to dismantle illegal outposts (including those that have been retroactively “legalized”); and to allow the natural growth of Palestinian towns, cities and population centers and the ability to travel without interference between and among contiguous Palestinian areas. These elements are essential to any sustainable peace in the Middle East and to preserving Israel’s own future as a Jewish, democratic state.

Diplomatic breakthroughs are complicated undertakings that require taking risks and making compromises on all sides. We applaud the administration's efforts to pursue the peaceful resolution of historic conflicts through diplomacy, and hope that the United States can facilitate the normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia in a way that is consistent with the principles outlined in this letter. As the parties make requests of the U.S. throughout your discussions, we hope that you will also seek commitments from them with respect to actions they can take to further U.S. national security interests and peace and stability in the region. We appreciate your commitment to this important initiative and ask that you keep us regularly apprised of developments.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



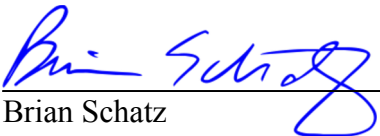
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



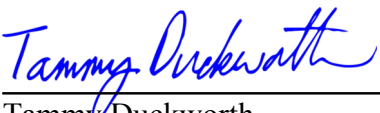
Peter Welch
United States Senator



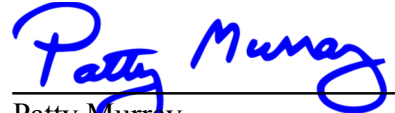
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



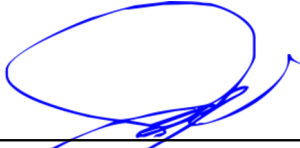
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



John Fetterman
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



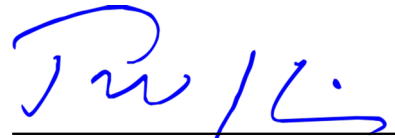
Jon Ossoff
United States Senator




Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Ben Ray Lujan

Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator